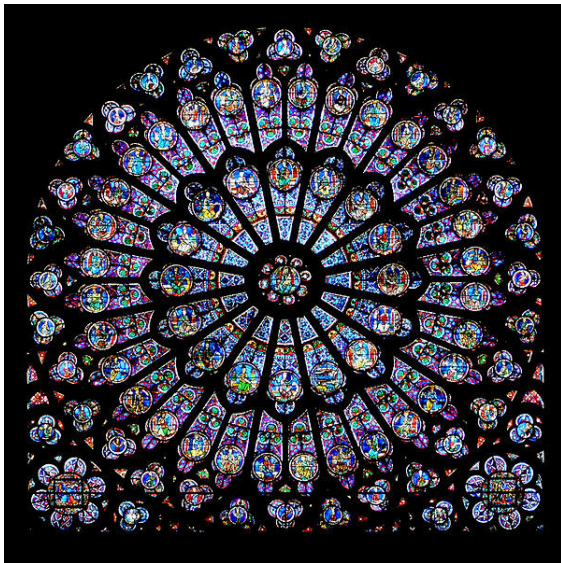


# Beauty

For beauty as a characteristic of a person's appearance, see **Physical attractiveness**. For other uses, see **Beauty** (disambiguation).



*Rayonnant rose window in Notre Dame de Paris. In Gothic architecture, light was considered the most beautiful revelation of God.*

**Beauty** is a characteristic of an animal, idea, object, person or place that provides a perceptual experience of pleasure or satisfaction. Beauty is studied as part of aesthetics, culture, social psychology and sociology. An “ideal beauty” is an entity which is admired, or possesses features widely attributed to beauty in a particular culture, for perfection.

The experience of “beauty” often involves an interpretation of some entity as being in balance and harmony with nature, which may lead to feelings of attraction and emotional well-being. Because this can be a subjective experience, it is often said that “beauty is in the eye of the beholder.”<sup>[1]</sup>

There is evidence that perceptions of beauty are evolutionarily determined, that things, aspects of people and landscapes considered beautiful are typically found in situations likely to give enhanced survival of the perceiving human's genes.<sup>[2][3]</sup>

## 1 Etymology

The classical Greek noun that best translates to the English “beauty” or “beautiful” was κάλλος, *kallos*, and the adjective was καλός, *kalos*. However, *kalos* may and is also translated as “good” or “of fine quality” and thus has a broader meaning than only beautiful. Similarly, *kallos* was used differently from the English word beauty in that it first and foremost applied to humans and bears an erotic connotation.<sup>[4]</sup>

The Koine Greek word for beautiful was ὥραϊος, *hōraios*,<sup>[5]</sup> an adjective etymologically coming from the word ὥρα, *hōra*, meaning “hour”. In Koine Greek, beauty was thus associated with “being of one's hour”.<sup>[6]</sup> Thus, a ripe fruit (of its time) was considered beautiful, whereas a young woman trying to appear older or an older woman trying to appear younger would not be considered beautiful. In Attic Greek, *hōraios* had many meanings, including “youthful” and “ripe old age”.<sup>[6]</sup>

## 2 Ancient Greek

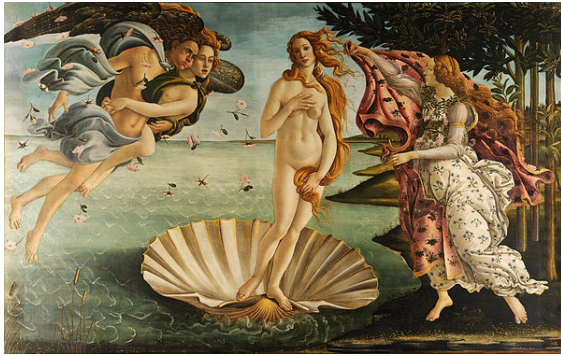
The earliest Western theory of beauty can be found in the works of early Greek philosophers from the pre-Socratic period, such as Pythagoras. The Pythagorean school saw a strong connection between mathematics and beauty. In particular, they noted that objects proportioned according to the golden ratio seemed more attractive.<sup>[7]</sup> Ancient Greek architecture is based on this view of symmetry and proportion.

Plato considered beauty to be the Idea (Form) above all other Ideas.<sup>[8]</sup> Aristotle saw a relationship between the beautiful (*to kalon*) and virtue, arguing that “Virtue aims at the beautiful.”<sup>[9]</sup>

Classical philosophy and sculptures of men and women produced according to the Greek philosophers' tenets of ideal human beauty were rediscovered in Renaissance Europe, leading to a re-adoption of what became known as a “classical ideal”. In terms of female human beauty, a woman whose appearance conforms to these tenets is still called a “classical beauty” or said to possess a “classical beauty”, whilst the foundations laid by Greek and Roman artists have also supplied the standard for male beauty in western civilization. During the Gothic era, the classical aesthetical canon of beauty was rejected as sinful. Later, Renaissance and Humanist thinkers rejected this view, and considered beauty to be the product of ra-

tional order and harmonious proportions. Renaissance artists and architects (such as **Giorgio Vasari** in his “Lives of Artists”) criticised the Gothic period as irrational and barbarian. This point of view of **Gothic art** lasted until Romanticism, in the 19th century.

### 3 The Age of Reason



The Birth of Venus, by Sandro Botticelli. The goddess Venus is the classical personification of beauty.

The **Age of Reason** saw a rise in an interest in beauty as a philosophical subject. For example, Scottish philosopher **Francis Hutcheson** argued that beauty is “unity in variety and variety in unity”.<sup>[10]</sup> The Romantic poets, too, became highly concerned with the **nature** of beauty, with **John Keats** arguing in “Ode on a Grecian Urn” that

Beauty is truth, truth beauty, —that is all.  
Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know.

### 4 The Romantic period

In the Romantic period, **Edmund Burke** postulated a difference between beauty in its classical meaning and the **sublime**. The concept of the sublime, as explicated by Burke and **Kant**, suggested viewing Gothic art and architecture, though not in accordance with the classical standard of beauty, as sublime.

### 5 The 20th century and after

The 20th century saw an increasing rejection of beauty by artists and philosophers alike, culminating in **postmodernism's** anti-aesthetics.<sup>[11]</sup> This is despite beauty being a central concern of one of postmodernism’s main influences, **Friedrich Nietzsche**, who argued that the Will to Power was the Will to Beauty.<sup>[12]</sup>

In the aftermath of postmodernism’s rejection of beauty, thinkers have returned to beauty as an important value.

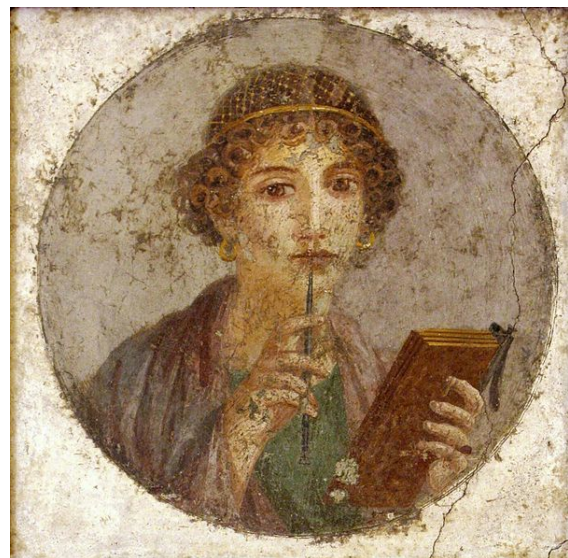
American analytic philosopher **Guy Sircello** proposed his New Theory of Beauty as an effort to reaffirm the status of beauty as an important philosophical concept.<sup>[13][14]</sup> Elaine Scarry also argues that beauty is related to justice.<sup>[15]</sup>

### 6 Human beauty

Main article: **Physical attractiveness**

The characterization of a person as “beautiful”, whether on an individual basis or by community consensus, is often based on some combination of *inner beauty*, which includes psychological factors such as personality, intelligence, grace, politeness, charisma, integrity, congruence and elegance, and *outer beauty* (i.e. physical attractiveness) which includes physical attributes which are valued on an aesthetic basis.

Standards of beauty have changed over time, based on changing cultural values. Historically, paintings show a wide range of different standards for beauty. However, humans who are relatively young, with smooth skin, well-proportioned bodies, and regular features, have traditionally been considered the most beautiful throughout history.



Fresco of a Roman woman from Pompeii, c. 50 AD

A strong indicator of physical beauty is “**averageness**”.<sup>[16][17][18][19][20][21][22][23][24][25][26][27][28][29]</sup> When images of human faces are averaged together to form a composite image, they become progressively closer to the “ideal” image and are perceived as more attractive. This was first noticed in 1883, when **Francis Galton**, cousin of **Charles Darwin**, overlaid photographic composite images of the faces of vegetarians and criminals to see if there was a typical facial appearance for each. When doing this, he noticed that



the composite images were more attractive compared to any of the individual images.<sup>[30]</sup> Researchers have replicated the result under more controlled conditions and found that the computer generated, mathematical average of a series of faces is rated more favorably than individual faces.<sup>[31]</sup> It is argued that it is evolutionarily advantageous that sexual creatures are attracted to mates who possess predominantly common or average features, because it suggests the **absence of genetic or acquired defects**.<sup>[16][32][33][34]</sup> There is also evidence that a preference for beautiful faces emerges early in infancy, and is probably innate,<sup>[23][24][25][26][35]</sup> and that the rules by which attractiveness is established are similar across different genders and cultures.<sup>[36][37][37]</sup>

A feature of beautiful women that has been explored by researchers is a **waist-hip ratio** of approximately 0.70. Physiologists have shown that women with **hourglass figures** are more fertile than other women due to higher levels of certain female hormones, a fact that may subconsciously condition males choosing mates.<sup>[38]</sup>

People are influenced by the images they see in the media to determine what is or is not beautiful. Some feminists and doctors have suggested that the very thin models featured in magazines promote **eating disorders**,<sup>[39]</sup> and others have argued that the predominance of white women featured in movies and advertising leads to a **Eurocentric** concept of beauty, feelings of inferiority in women of color,<sup>[40]</sup> and **internalized racism**.<sup>[41]</sup>

The **black is beautiful** cultural movement sought to dispel this notion.<sup>[42]</sup>

Fatima Lodhi, a young diversity and anti-colorism advocate from **Pakistan**, claims that “Beauty comes in all shapes, shades and sizes”.<sup>[43]</sup>

The concept of beauty in men is known as 'bishōnen' in Japan. Bishōnen refers to males with distinctly **feminine** features, physical characteristics establishing the standard of beauty in Japan and typically exhibited in their **pop culture idols**. A multibillion-dollar industry of **Japanese Aesthetic Salons** exists for this reason.

## 7 Effects on society

Beauty presents a standard of **comparison**, and it can cause resentment and dissatisfaction when not achieved. People who do not fit the “beauty ideal” may be ostracized within their communities. The television sitcom *Ugly Betty* portrays the life of a girl faced with hardships due to society’s unwelcoming attitudes toward those they deem unattractive. However, a person may also be targeted for harassment because of their beauty. In *Malèna*, a strikingly beautiful Italian woman is forced into poverty by the women of the community who refuse to give her work for fear that she may “woo” their husbands. The documentary *Beauty in the Eyes of the Beheld* explores both the societal blessings and curses of female beauty



*Chinese jade ornament with flower design, Jin dynasty (1115–1234 AD), Shanghai Museum*



*The night sky in the Atacama Desert. The concept of noctcaelador describes an emotional attachment to, or adoration of, the night sky<sup>[44]</sup>*

through interviews of women considered beautiful.

Researchers have found that good looking students get higher grades from their teachers than students with an ordinary appearance.<sup>[45]</sup> Some studies using mock criminal trials have shown that physically attractive “defendants” are less likely to be convicted—and if convicted are likely to receive lighter sentences—than less attractive ones (although the opposite effect was observed when the alleged crime was swindling, perhaps because jurors perceived the defendant’s attractiveness as facilitating the crime).<sup>[46]</sup> Studies among teens and young adults, such as those of psychiatrist and self-help author, **Eva Ritvo**, show that skin conditions have a profound effect on social behavior and opportunity.<sup>[47]</sup>

How much money a person earns may also be influenced by physical beauty. One study found that people low in physical attractiveness earn 5 to 10 percent less than ordinary looking people, who in turn earn 3 to 8 percent less than those who are considered good looking.<sup>[48]</sup> In the market for loans, the least attractive people are less likely to get approvals, although they are less likely to default. In the marriage market, women’s looks are at a premium, but men’s looks do not matter much.<sup>[49]</sup>

Conversely, being very unattractive increases the individual’s propensity for criminal activity for a number of crimes ranging from burglary to theft to selling illicit drugs.<sup>[50]</sup>

Discrimination against others based on their appearance is known as **lookism**.<sup>[51]</sup>

St. Augustine said of beauty “Beauty is indeed a good gift of God; but that the good may not think it a great good, God dispenses it even to the wicked.”<sup>[52]</sup>

## 8 Ugliness

**Ugliness** is a property of a person or thing that is unpleasant to look upon and results in a highly unfavorable evaluation. To be ugly is to be aesthetically unattractive, repulsive, or offensive.<sup>[53][54]</sup>

People who appear ugly to others suffer well-documented discrimination, earning 10 to 15 percent less per year than similar workers, and are less likely to be hired for almost any job, but lack legal recourse to fight discrimination.<sup>[55]</sup>

For some people, ugliness is a central aspect of their persona. **Jean-Paul Sartre** had a lazy eye and a bloated, asymmetrical face, and he attributed many of his philosophical ideas to his lifelong struggle to come to terms with his self-described ugliness.<sup>[56]</sup> **Socrates** also used his ugliness as a philosophical touch point, concluding that philosophy can save us from our outward ugliness.<sup>[56]</sup> Famous in his own time for his perceived ugliness, **Abraham Lincoln** was described by a contemporary: “to say that he is ugly is nothing; to add that his figure is grotesque, is to convey no adequate impression.” However, his looks proved to be an asset in his personal and political relationships, as his law partner **William Herndon** wrote, “He was not a pretty man by any means, nor was he an ugly one; he was a homely man, careless of his looks, plain-looking and plain-acting. He had no pomp, display, or dignity, so-called. He appeared simple in his carriage and bearing. He was a sad-looking man; his melancholy dripped from him as he walked. His apparent gloom impressed his friends, and created sympathy for him—one means of his great success.”<sup>[57]</sup>

## 9 See also

- Adornment
- Beauty pageant
- Body modification
- Glamour (presentation)
- Processing fluency theory of aesthetic pleasure

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## 11 External links

- Sartwell, Crispin. "Beauty". *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*.
- Beauty at the Indiana Philosophy Ontology Project
- BBC Radio 4's In Our Time programme on Beauty (requires RealAudio)
- *Dictionary of the History of Ideas*: Theories of Beauty to the Mid-Nineteenth Century
- [beautycheck.de/english](http://beautycheck.de/english) Regensburg University – Characteristics of beautiful faces
- Eli Siegel's "Is Beauty the Making One of Opposites?"
- *Art and love in Renaissance Italy*, Issued in connection with an exhibition held Nov. 11, 2008-Feb. 16, 2009, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (see *Belle: Picturing Beautiful Women*; pages 246-254).



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Cole5250, Madhero88, Jennab63, Lamro, SallyBoseman, Falcon8765, 1950hippy, Insanity Incarnate, Brianga, Monty845, Pastel kitten, Mary quite contrary, Snakes12, JoshuaSabik, AlleborgoBot, GavinTing, Logan, Baronvonperish, PericlesofAthens, Venopher, FlyingLeopard2014, Mrwiseguy4, Tsukikosagi, Junaid siraj, Deconstructhis, Mmlim, Theoneintraining, The Random Editor, Kansastown, EJJ, SieBot, Coffee, Necronomicomedian, Calliopejen1, Tresiden, Jon2harman, Azazyel, TrentW89, Jirachi 8, Darksyth, Maddieruud, Winchelsea, Meeks373, Dawn Bard, Caltas, Grshvekooties7, PaulCarr57, Angebones, Triwbe, Thecrow666, Darklittleone6, Yubnub87, Bileiro~enwiki, Keilana, Bentogoa, CombatCraig, Arolga, Dark goth fairy, Xkfusionxx, JSpung, Nanoxide, Ihatetok, Oxymoron83, Antonio Lopez, Faradayplank, William Henry Harrison, KoshVorlon, Pac72, Mister Hospodar, Lara bran, Falconalconcalco, KathrynLybarger, Nskillen, Astrale01, Gedom, RyanParis, Fratrep, Desimator2000, Brapsafe, Diego Grez-Cañete, Mason240, La 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Animosus, Indokid93, Mnl831, Razorflame, Pman13, Huntthetroll, Mallrat5 20, Dekisugi, Theliar116, Kremloin, Suramik, Polly, X.x.brooklyn.hope.x.x, Amwong, La Pianista, Cantarevolare, Friedlibend und tapfer, FireOcean, Silly goose 2010, Taranet, Ironhouse, Thingg, BenBobb, Aitias, 7, 2, BugJooce, Versus22, Dana boomer, Limegreenq7, MelonBot, SoxBot III, Apparition11, NERIC-Security, Tdsk, Tm156207, TheMaster2006, Johnsmith35, Dasexyshaky, Juliejealousy, Bridies, XLinkBot, AgnosticPreachersKid, Nicoiscool, Kevinsluckynumbersev3n, Laughwithlovex, Hegumen, Duncan, Nepenthes, Little Mountain 5, Asmodeus Samael, Billwhittaker, Crimsontotality, Doc9871, Pretty.good.brain, Willeybobthorton, Noctibus, Xenonvision, WikiDao, Atomicdor, ZooFari, Redhotstephenwepenthen, Dexter9, Caitlin A, KJohansson, J0hn3r731, Iamtanvin, Airplaneman, Elliott flignor, Shoemaker's Holiday, RyanCross, Cicithprettyone, Zakax33, Roctavia, Gentle11, Winterdimery, Hdraw, Moonzeppelin, Addbot, Mclovincortez, Some jerk on 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Clicksymcoer, Gayreth, Greedygoldstein1, BruceWillisMan, Theonlyolgiz, AnomieBOT, Artpal, Jim1138, JackieBot, Arrg1090, Piano non troppo, CharlieSoto, Greenboymatt25, Kingpin13, Blackmoon1200, Ulric1313, Mchuge235, KnightnDullMetal, B137, Nickdrwal, MaterialsScientist, Saltheshoe, Dalv89, Dudewithacar, Livihead, Citation bot, Bmxican906, OllieFury, Reiannccompany, ArthurBot, Xqbot, Scottman0, TinucherianBot II, Apothecia, Meh222, JimVC3, Wapondaponda, Poetaris, Nasnema, Dk64k, Quarkde, Butterfly.jewel, Anna Frodesiak, Inferno, Lord of Penguins, Srich32977, Almatbot, Bleff, GrouchoBot, Ute in DC, Riggedfallacy, Omnipaedia, Prunesqualer, Mathonius, Joker1432, Nyakondac, Mario080595, FlashlightSearch, Haunterk, Doulos Christos, Laredo2047, Ruktion69, Bobbo1123, Smallman12q, Natural Cut, John Rushton83, Erik9, 123698745lolcats, Josemanimala, KAVYBOY87, Sristys, Bekus, FrescoBot, Fregg, Killaherbz, Perfection84, LucienBOT, Bobby72, PhiloFaster, Sky Attacker, An41, Duffroxx, Nagzz, 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Iloveyou0, Childofthechicken, AuburnTigers, Blueelwang, Star767, Saxdicapped, QuantoAltoPossoVolare, CORNFLAKEDUDE, Miosterelliott22, Samm757, 2gucci4u, B14709, JimTheKing, Maryjhunt, ParkerLasher, YiFeiBot, Ginsuloft, MagicatthemovieS, JaconaFrere, Sharif Uddin, Oggmus, Filedelinkerbot, Vinay9350, Quesadilladude, Malikillman, Lazarosgeronikolos, Fliencats, Mvdison, Foxy grandpa23, Uthinkuknow, GunnarSch, Ieuan97, Cynulliad, Whalestate, KasparBot, Ella.US, AeAnBr, The name, Cslidigicol, The Professor123, GreenC bot, Greek Beauty and Anonymous: 1858

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